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ABSTRACT

The past and present of the Blackfeet Tribe are the subject of the five essays in this document. Written by young tribal members, the essays are intended for readers unfamiliar with the tribe. The first essay, "Before the Reservation", is an introduction to the early history and life style of the tribe, including its migration to the Great Plains over 300 years and subsequent rise to power as "the most formidable and warlike people on the Northwestern Plains." The second essay explores treaties and agreements with the U.S. government, Executive orders and proclamations, and the 21 Acts of Congress affecting the Blackfeet Reservation. Three pages of maps show the diminishment of tribal lands from the wide extent of those territories held by the Blackfeet at the height of their power in 1851 to the area within the boundaries of the present day Reservation. The third essay, on tribal government, describes past and present political organization with particular attention directed to the functions of the Tribal Business Council. The fourth essay, "Education," begins with a description of the earliest mission schools of the mid 1800s and ranges through all of the different types of schools operated on behalf of the tribe, including the four schools presently operating on the reservation. The final essay gives an overview of the Tribe, quickly summarizing its past history and then moving into conditions on the reservation today (government, demographic data, educational system, housing, health, religion). (DS)

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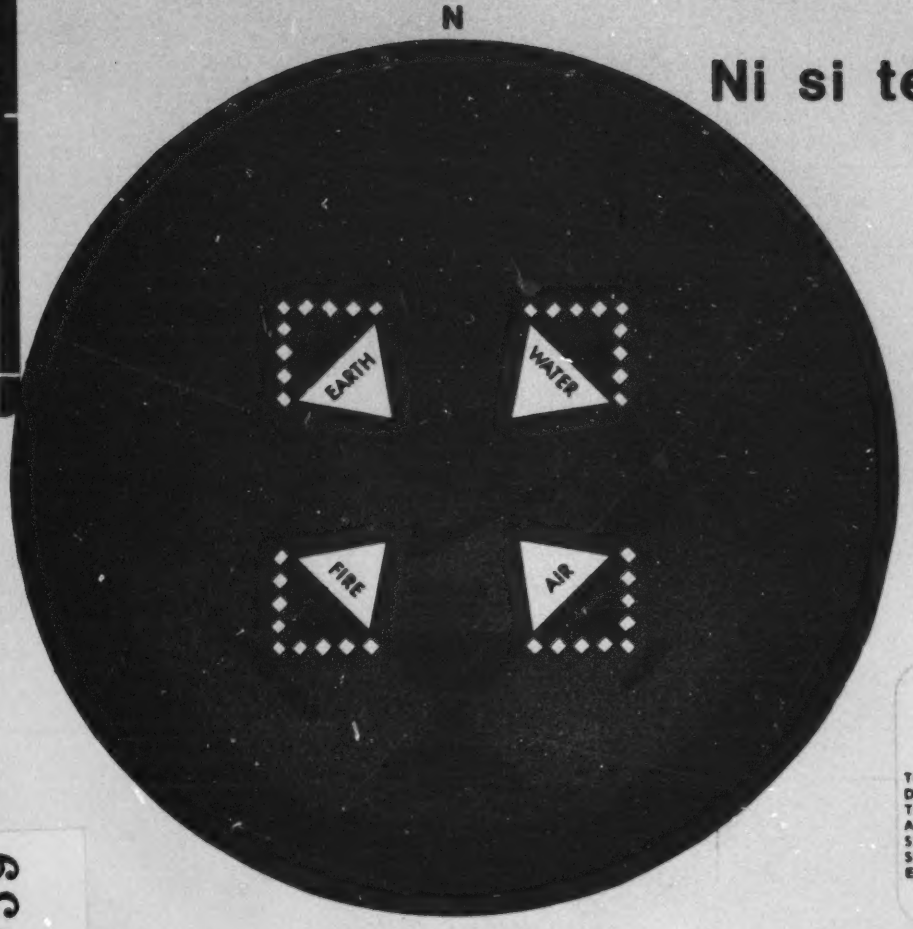


BLACKFEET CONFEDERACY
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## PREFACE

These five introductory essays on the Blackfeet, written by young tribal members, are intended for readers who are unfamiliar with the tribe's history. They were not designed to be read as a series. Each section is self-contained and gives enough background to make it understandable without reading the others. Because of this, there is some overlap from section to section. Any information which is repeated as your interest leads you from Treaties, Exectutive Orders and Agreements, for instance, to Tribal Government, or one of the other areas, will help reinforce your understanding of the basics of Blackfeet history.

Dwight A. Billedeaux
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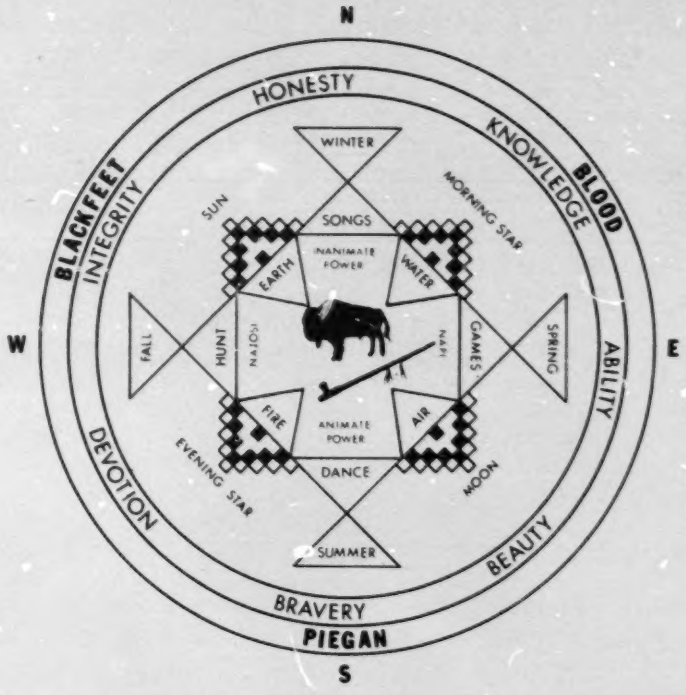



**BLACKFEET CONFEDERACY**
**CYCLE OF CULTURE**



## CONTENTS

I. BEFORE THE RESERVATION 4
Diane Barlow

II. TREATIES, EXECUTIVE ORDERS AND ACTS OF CONGRESS 10
Viney Kennedy

III. TRIBAL GOVERNMENT 18
James Kennedy

IV. EDUCATION 21
Jackie Parsons

V. AN OVERVIEW OF THE BLACKFEET 26
Stan Juneau

NOTES 30

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY 31

THE WRITERS 32

# I. BEFORE THE RESERVATION DIANE BARLOW

An understanding of the history of any race of people is very significant in the relationship that will develop between them and another people. A full history of the Blackfeet Indians is an undertaking too vast for the scope and purpose of this section. More detailed writings on Blackfeet history are available; our purpose here is to give a general introduction to the early history.

It is believed that the Blackfeet were originally an eastern woodlands tribe and migrated westward over three centuries ago, from a homeland located north of the Great Lakes. Warfare between the various eastern tribes vying for the rich fur trade initiated by the French in the early 1500's may have caused the migration of several tribes westward. The Blackfeet seem to have been one of the first of the woodland peoples to move westward along the Saskatchewan River. [1]

The Blackfeet language belongs to the Algonkian linguistic family, which is centered in the eastern woodlands region of North America. The shaping of wooden utensils and bowls and an almost forgotten tradition of pottery making also relate the Blackfeet to the eastern woodlands region. [2]

As they migrated to the Great Plains region, an area abundant in Buffalo and other wildlife, the Blackfeet subsistence methods quickly evolved from woodland hunting and gathering, to the ways of nomadic hunters. They also quickly adapted to living in portable, skin-covered tipis.

By the time the Blackfeet established their extensive territory in the northwest region, they were organized as a loose confederacy of three politically independent tribes; a southern confederacy called the Piegan, now living in Montana, a central division called the Bloods, and the Northern Blackfeet or Blackfeet proper. The latter two tribes now reside on reserves in the province of Alberta, Canada. The Blackfeet tribes consider themselves





to be of common descent and long ago were probably one tribe. Their names originated in the following way: Blackfeet proper or Northern Blackfeet (Sik-Sika) may have dyed their footgear black or moccasins may have been coated with black earth or ashes from prairie fires. Neighboring Cree bestowed the name "Blackfeet". Piegan (Pikuni) refers to a people who possessed torn robes or who were poorly dressed. The Blood tribe may have received such a name because its members painted their faces and robes with red earth, which is still sacred paint among all Blackfeet tribes. However, the Blood's name for themselves is Kainah, mean "Many Chiefs". [3]

In the early days on the plains the Blackfeet had only dogs for moving camp. Their homeland tended to be on the valley of the North Saskatchewan River in a country of grassy prairies broken by forested hills, river valleys and lakes. It had the necessities of life: wild game, wild plant foods, water and firewood. Long cold winters and short summers were typical. Most importantly, it was buffalo country. The life of the Blackfeet centered around the life and movements of the buffalo. In spring, summer and fall, the buffalo grazed on open grasslands, but in the harsh winter the animals sought food and shelter in the wooded valleys, where there was protection from the snow and wind.

The tribes divided into separate hunting bands of about 20 to 30 families, which would number about one hundred to two hundred people. The band was large enough to encircle a small herd of buffalo, yet small enough to survive during scarce food periods. Most of the year hunting bands moved from one temporary encampment to another, while following the buffalo. Each family was responsible for moving its own baggage. The tipi was the largest and heaviest possession. Small lodges were used in these days, since a strong dog would only drag a load of about seventy-five pounds on an A-shaped wooden travois. Lodge furnishings and household utensils were kept to a minimum and packed into compact skin sacks or bundles which could be hauled by dogs or women. Men

traveled light, carrying only weapons, constantly on the the look-out for enemies or signs of wild game. Mothers carried infants on their backs as well as a share of the baggage. Women also kept the dogs in line and tried to prevent them from fighting or running off. Obviously long marches were not practicable under these conditions. Five or six miles was a good day's march.

One method of hunting buffalo was for the women to put their dog travois fence-fashion, downwind of a herd of buffalo. The travois were so spaced that they could be tied together to form a simi-circular fence; then two swift running men approached the buffalo from upwind and drove them toward the travois fence. Other men closed in. Barking dogs and shouting women kept the buffalo back from the travois fence. The men rushed in and killed the buffalo with arrows and lances. After the buffalo were killed, the chief divided the meat equally between the participating families. The hides and bones were utilized as lodge covers, clothing and utensils.

Another method used in late fall, was to drive the buffalo into a corral built on a downhill slope. Stakes projected about three or four feet inside the corral, so that if the buffalo tried to escape, they would be impaled on the stakes. The entrance on the uphill side was covered with water and manure, which froze and became slippery, so that the buffalo could not escape by climbing the hill.

Hunting buffalo was never an easy task - sometimes the wind shifted and gave away a hunter's presence or an unusual sound frightened the buffalo away. Yet the band's success or failure in the buffalo hunt was of vital importance for the hard winter months. Should food reserves dwindle and and coincide with winter storms, the band went hungry. If there was no break in the weather, they starved.

Warfare in dog days pitted the Blackfeet against the Shoshoni, who dwelled on the plains southwest of the Piegan. Occasionally both sides mustered forces of several hundred warriors drawn from various hunting bands. They gathered in the summer when food supplies were plentiful and they could leave the women, children, and elderly with enough food. If a sizeable enemy force was encountered, the opposing sides formed long lines facing one another - barely within arrow range. They knelt behind rawhide shields and shot their arrows at the enemy. Fighting sometimes continued until darkness brought it to a halt. Lances and clubs carried by the warriors weren't used unless one side sufficiently outnumbered the other and closed in on the attack. If the warring forces were nearly equal, the fighting usually ended in a stalemate at the day's end.





More typical and more dangerous warfare in dog days was the surpise attack on a small hunting camp by a superior band. In these attacks, casualties were heavy, as defenders desperately fought against the attackers. Sometimes the men were wiped out and women and children taken captive. Women become wives of the victors and carried on with their same duties, while children were adopted into the alien tribe. In the toilsome life of the Blackfeet women, youthful beauty was short lived. With old age they became bent and feeble. Men were hunters, warriors and craftmen, making ceremonial and religious equipment.

Many Blackfeet religious beliefs in dog days were carried over from the beliefs held by the forest Algonkian tribes. They shared a basic belief in the ability of supernatural birds or animals to communicate their sacred power to young men who sought it by fasting and praying. Men who received power from the same animal formed cults and performed ceremonies sacred to that animal. The beaver cult was one of the most important cults because it was beaver medicine men whose rituals charmed buffalo into the corral and brought food to the people in time of need. Magic was also of importance in Blackfeet religion. The shaking tent rite was an impressive magicial performance witnessed by a white trader prior to 1795. A medicine man allowed himself to be tightly bound and placed in the tent. The tent began to shake, sounds of struggle and strange songs come forth until

the medicine man emerged unbound and made predictions of future events. Religion was an important part of life in dog days, since the Blackfeet constantly lived on the brink of death from starvation, disease, or enemy attack. Absent from Blackfeet religion then, was the great sun dance cermony held each summer in latter times.

No tribal chief was recognized in dog days; the hunting band was the primary political unit, with hunting chiefs providing leadership. The Blackfeet in dog days were a hardy, nomadic, hunting people. Detailed information is not readily available because during this period very few white men came into contact with the Blackfeet. The Blackfeet people shared among themselves the buffalo which were killed. They were neither rich nor poor. Accumulation of wealth with their limited travel facilities was impossible. There was not much leisure, but time was found for telling old stories, singing songs, and dancing. The Blackfeet were a self-reliant people then, depending on no alien folk for necessities.

During the 18th century the Blackfeet became acquainted with alien people, English and French trappers and traders. The Blackfeet named these white skinned bearded men, "napikwan", meaning Old Man Person. The miracles of Napikwan rivaled those associated with the Blackfeet traditional creator, Napi. The Hudson Bay Company built trading posts on the bay and encouraged Indians to bring in furs and trade items. The Blackfeet, however, had no desire nor time to travel to the posts on the bay. Sometime in the mid-1700's the Blackfeet came into contact with horses and also guns. They referred to the horse as "ponokamita" or "elk dog" and admired him greatly. The Cree and Assiniboine tribes served as middlemen in the trade between Blackfeet and the French for firearms. Perhaps this indirect trade acquainted the Blackfeet more and more with European-made foods and enabled the French posts to expand closer to Blackfeet country. But France relinquished claims in Canada to England in 1763. The British, operating from Hudson Bay, had no luck in persuading





the Blackfeet to travel by river to the bay for trading purposes. The Blackfeet stated that the journey was too long and they disliked canoes and fish. But early English traders who traveled to Blackfeet country to pursuade them to trade directly, proved a valuable insight into Blackfeet life. By this time the Blackfeet were excellent horsemen and nomadic hunters, who still depended on the buffalo, and they had pushed their traditional enemies, the Shoshonies and Shoshoni allies, the Flatheads and Kootenais, west of the Rocky Mountains. The aggressive Blackfeet were truly raiders on the Northwest plains, as John C. Ewers calls them.

When the English eventually built forts on the Saskatchewan River, the Blackfeet chose to exchange fresh buffalo meat, dried meat and pemmican for goods from Europe. The Blackfeet loved to hunt buffalo much more than to trap beaver, which was still a sacred animal to many. Valuable items to the Blackfeet in the trader's stock included firearms, tobacco, and liquor. A variety of metal objects was also obtained: knives, lance heads, kettles, and axes. Beads and rings were popular among the women.

In the summer the Blackfeet lived in large tribal camps to defend themselves against their enemies. They hunted buffalo on horseback with bow and arrow, or like the Piegan, they lured buffalo over a high precipice. If the animals weren't killed by the fall, they were usually so bruised and shaken that they were easily dispatched by the hunters.

It is known that by this time the Piegan, and most likely the Blackfeet proper and the Bloods, had a civil chief and a war chief. The civil chief was renowned for his eloquence and the latter for success in war parties. But their authority was limited. They were leaders only by consent and the will of their people.

Summer also was the traditional ceremonial season of the Blackfeet. Painstaking attention was given to ceremonial smoking, using pipes three or four feet long. The sun dance was the highlite of the summer and a major tribal religious ceremony. Probably the

ceremony was derived from another Plains Indian tribe, but it was modified and adjusted to existing Blackfeet ceremonial patterns. A woman, the medicine women, played a leading role in the sun dance. Only a woman who had lived a virtuous life and who had been loyal to her husband could qualify for the part. She assumed this role by making a promise to the sun that she would serve as medicine woman, provided a loved one regained health, her husband returned safely, etc. She underwent five days of fasting. On the fifth and most important day of the ceremony the medicine lodge was built. The erection of the lodge (a touchy procedure) determined whether or not the medicine woman was virtuous. Praying, gift giving and dancing were part of the sun dance. Celebration, as well as the dramatic scenes of self-torture by young warriors, occurred. The warriors breasts were pierced with a sharp arrowhead and a sarvais berry stick inserted through each breast. Skewers were also pierced through their back and a small shield hung on the skewers. Rawhide ropes connected to the center medicine lodge pole were tied to the breast skewers. The warrior danced and prayed until the skewers came loose or until he fainted from the pain.[4] The Blackfeet, as before, still found much comfort and relevance in their religion. When missionaries filtered into Blackfeet country, the Blackfeet were very slow in abandoning their religion for the new strange one which they found hard to relate to.[5] The Blackfeet believed in supernatural powers in the skies and waters as well as on land. Sun and thunder were the most powerful sky spirits. Beaver and otter were important underwater spirits and on land buffalo, elk, eagles and crows, among the others, held power. As in earlier days supernatural power was given to men in dreams after a period of fasting and praying in an isolated spot. A spirit in human form came to him and showed him certain objects sacred to that spirit. The spirit told him how to make and care for the objects and then gave him songs, face paint designs and taboos. When the young man returned home, he made the articles in accordance with the





instructions given by the spirit. These objects comprised his personal medicine bundle. The Blackfeet regarded the sacred objects of the medicine bundle as important symbols of power but they were not the power itself. It was the owner who possessed the power.

In cases of minor ailments the Blackfeet had home remedies, but when someone was seriously ill, they called upon a man or woman who had magical powers to expell the evil spirit causing the sickness. Most of the renowned doctors were women. It was customary to pay the doctor one or more horses for his or her services.

Blackfeet Indians were a fun loving people, who enjoyed funny stories, practical jokes and a variety of games and sports. Old Man or Napi, looked upon as their creator, was seen as a humourous little fellow whose tricks often backfired. Many Napi stories aren't only funny, but also obscene. The children and adults knew many games and the children had many toys and playthings, such as dolls, hobby-horses, toy horses and so forth. Children learned from their parents and elders and prepared themselves for adult life. They were taught to respect their elders. The mother was responsible for educating her daughter in women's responsiblities. The girl began helping her mother with light tasks at an early age, while the fathers looked after the education of their sons. Boys had more freedom than the girls and were encouraged to take part in rough body building sports. The hero worshipping youth were told again and again the stirring stories of outstanding fighting men of past and present and were reminded that "It is better to die in battle then of old age or sickness".

Unlike the Blackfeet from dog days, there were more distinctions of wealth after the Blackfeet accumulated horses and trade items from the white man. The man of wealth and his family dressed well, owned many horses, and their tipis were large and well furnished. Two horses were needed to carry an average size lodge, so the poorer families usually had only two horses and their possessions were usually few.

Compared to a dog day march, the Blackfeet covered twice as many miles with their horses.

The hunting band was much more fluid than it had been but was still the basic political unit. Band allegiance was changed if people thought they would be better off with another band.

The chiefs exercised little disciplinary power over their followers. In summer encampment, selected men policed the camp, but during the winter months when the bands separated, tribal discipline was nonexistent. The wronged individual was expected to provide punishment to the wrong doer. Usually the criminal fled to another band to escape punishment. Theft was followed by reclaiming stolen property; murder was punishable by death by the dead man's relatives. However, if the murderer was rich and the relative of the deceased poor, the killer could probably make a payment of horses to the relative and the matter would be settled.

Young Blackfeet men enjoyed a remarkable amount of freedom in their actions and in their sex lives. They usually would brag about their conquests, while it was not acceptable for a girl to be so free with her favors. Polygamy was common among the Blackfeet because the women outnumbered the men considerably, due to men's lives lost in war. Marriage usually took place when a girl was in her middle teens and the young man at least twenty-one or over. The socially approved marriage was an important family function. It was solemnized by an exchange of gifts between the bride's and groom's families. The bride then went to live with her husband in a separate lodge or that of his family.

A man was the undisputed lord of the household and the wife was expected to wait on him and bear any mistreatment. If things got unbearable though, or if a husband tired of his wife, she would go back to her family with her property and the marriage was dissolved. If a woman was unfaithful to her husbnad, it was an old practice to cut off the end of her nose and thus mark her for the rest of her life. This practice was discontinued by the middle 1870's.





Unlike the old days, when an old person became unable to travel with the band, he didn't ask to be abandoned on the plains, but was carried on the travois. Following the death of a respected person, the body was dressed in finery and laid upon a raised platform in the lodge belonging to the deceased. Horses were sacrified - anguished widows or relatives mourned for several weeks. Some widows chopped off a joint of their finger in memory of their loved one. The Blackfeet believed that after death the spirit of the deceased horse carried him to a good land with plenty of buffalo and other game.

In the first three decades of the nineteenth century the Blackfeet encountered American explorers and traders in the Missouri River Valley. They soon learned to distinguish between their old friends the "Northern White Men" and their new enemies, the Americans or "Big Knives", the name referring to the sharp, dangerous hunting knives carried by the Americans. Hostility toward the Americans begain with a Blackfeet encounter with Lewis and Clark in 1804. In an attempt to disarm the whites, a Piegan was stabbed and another shot.

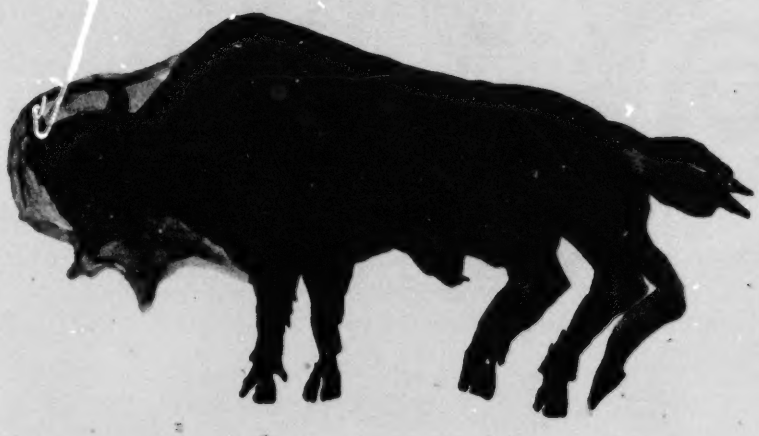
The Blackfeet tribes were at the height of their power in the middle of the 19th century. Their Indian enemies and white fur traders knew them as the most formidable and warlike people on the Northwestern plains. Warfare, the principal occupation of young men, was primarily to capture horses, which would gain wealth for the warriors. Because of the warring Blackfeet, American traders withdrew in 1811. So great was the respect for the Blackfeet, that overland parties of traders were willing to detour to the south rather than cross Blackfeet country. In doing so, they discovered the Oregon trail. American traders who attempted to open trade with the Blackfeet suffered heavy losses from raids. Whether some of the raids were encouraged by the rival northern white traders in open to question. In the 1830's Alexander McKenzie, a former Canadain trader, established peaceful relations with the Piegans and set up a trading

post. The Blackfeet agreed to trade with McKenzie but to never allow white trappers on their land.

In 1837 the Blackfeet were hit by a devastating small pox plague. One epidemic originated in infected clothing sent to the American Fur Co. at Fort McKenzie. Nearly two-thirds of the entire Blackfeet population succumbed to the dreaded disease. Yet the Blackfeet recovered and continued to trade with the American Fur Company.

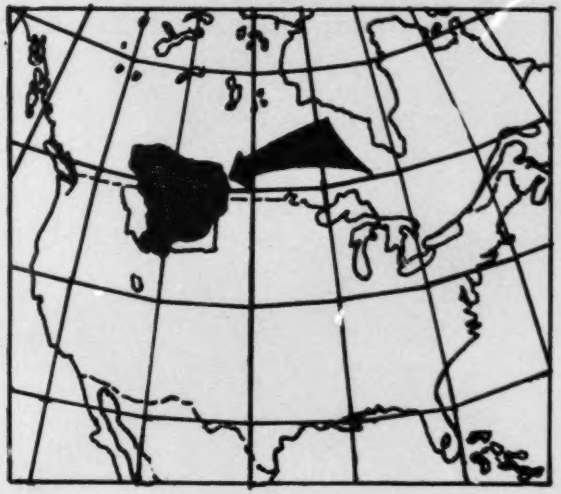
By 1850, white men were still few in Blackfeet country and most were employed in the fur trade. There were no white women. Fur traders were businessmen, intent on exploiting the rich resources of animal life. Few of them had any interest in the future welfare of the Indians. By encouraging the Indians to slaughter more buffalo, direly needed for their subsistence, the traders helped to hasten the extermination of the Indian's primary resource. Decades of association with white traders taught the Blackfeet little of the size or nature of the white man's civilization. The presence of the traders did little to prepare the Blackfeet for the full impact of white civilization, which was to come with the land hungry settlers in a few years.

Beloved chiefs such as Mountain Chief, Little Dog, White Calf, After Buffalo, and more, were to meet time and time again with the Great White Father to work on treaties and reservation boundaries. Some met with death, many others with disappointment and discouragment, as their land, buffalo, and way of life slipped away.



Keyed to TREATIES, EXECUTIVE ORDERS AND ACTS OF CONGRESS

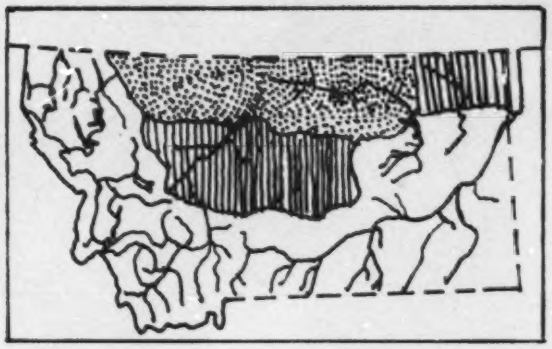
The following maps are taken from the Browning Blackfeet Comprehensive Plan:



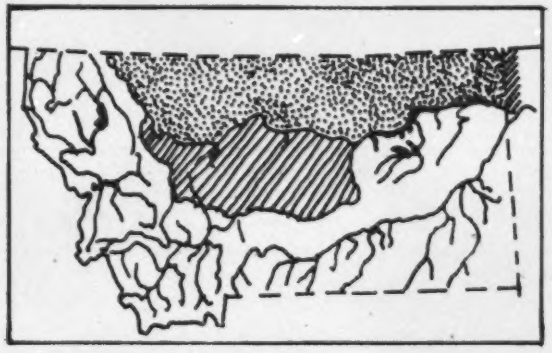
1. Blackfeeet Territory - 1800 - The Blackfeet at the height of their power. The boundaries run east from a point in the summit of the Rocky Mountains west of Fort Edmonton, taking the country to the east and south including the Porcupine Hills, Cypress Mountains and Little Rocky Mountains, down to the mouth of the Yellowstone on the Missouri, to the Beaverhead; thence to the summit of the Rocky Mountains and north along them to the starting point.

2. Blackfeet Territory - 1851 - Though the Blackfeet were not represented at the treaty of Fort Laramie, their boundaries were set and limited.

3. Blackfeet Territory - 1855 - The Blackfeet ceded lands that lay south and west of a line drawn from Hell Gate Pass on the continental divide to the source of the Musselshell River as a common hunting ground to be used by: the Blackfeet Nation consisting of Southern Piegans, Bloods, Northern Piegans, Blackfeet, and Gros Ventre; the Nez Perce; and the Flathead Nation, consisting of Flathead, Upper Pend d' Oreille and Kootenai tribes.

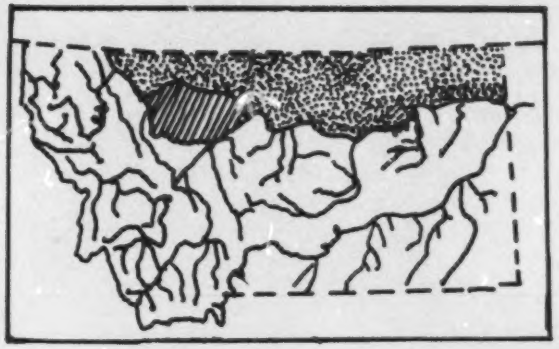


4. Blackfeet Territory - 1865 - The Blackfeet signed a treaty to cede to the United States all lands south of the Missouri River to the Teton River and east to the mouth of the Milk River. The treaty was not ratified by Congress and thus not enacted.

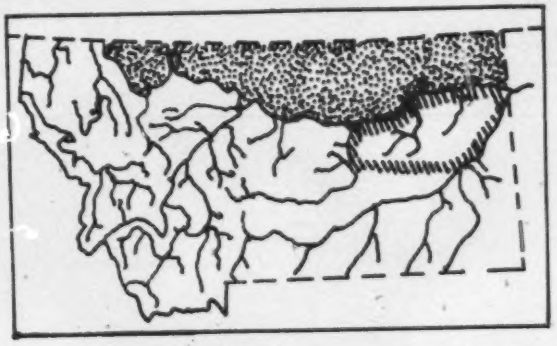


5. Blackfeet Reservation - 1873 - President Grant issued an executive order upon the recommendation of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, that moved the southern boundary of the reservation to the Missouri and Sun Rivers and the eastern boundary to the Dakota line.



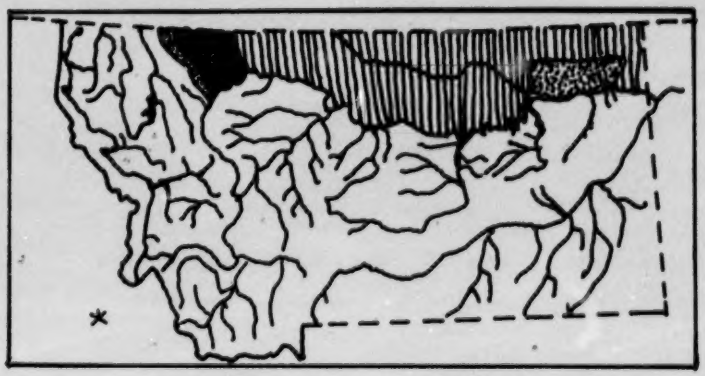


6. Blackfeet Reservation - 1874 - Under pressure from cattlemen for more grazing lands, President Grant issued a second executive order that arbitrarily moved the southern reservation boundary to the Marias River and Birch Creek. The Blackfeet complained bitterly that they had lost their prime hunting ground and that they had no right of protest in the matter.



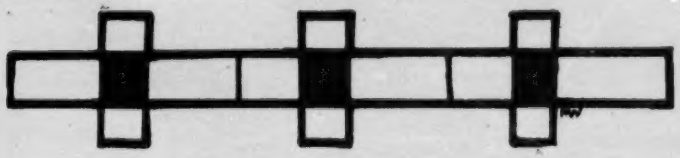
7. Blackfeet Reservation - 1875 - Yielding to congressional opinion that the Blackfeet had a just complaint about the 1874 order, President Grant issued a third executive order, restoring some of the land.

8. Blackfeet Reservation - 1880 - President Hayes signed a fourth executive order that placed the 1875 concession back in the public domain and the reservation once again conformed to the 1874 boundaries.



9. Blackfeet Reservation - 1888 - An agreement signed by the Blackfeet on Febraury 11, 1887 was ratified by Congress and set new boundaries.

10. Blackfeet Reservation - 1896 to present - In return for a ten year continuation of the payments set forth in the 1888 agreement, the Blackfeet ceded a strip of land on the eastern slope of the continental divide to the United States. First created as a National Forest, in 1910 that land was designated as a part of Glacier National Park, which was established that year.



* Key, to Maps 9 and 10

Ceded Territory

Present Reservation

Other Reservations or, on #9, land ceded at a later date.

## II TREATIES, EXECUTIVE ORDERS AND ACTS OF CONGRESS

VINEY KENNEDY

The Blackfeet Nation consists of four tribes: the Southern Piegans in Montana, the Kainai or Bloods, the Northern Piegans and the Blackfoot people in Alberta, Canada. Each has its own reservation and deals with its respective government on a singular basis. The Southern Piegan are the only Blackfeet on the United States side of the Canadain border, although the other three tribes often signed treaties when visiting relatives in the United States. Unlike most tribes in the United States, the Blackfeet were never moved from one point to another and put upon an alien reservation; they were here long before the white man came to this country. What did happen, however, was a gradual reduction of Blackfeet lands.

Several treaties and acts of Congress have transpired between the United States government and the Blackfeet. The United States no longer makes treaties with Indian tribes. This decison was embodied in the Congressional Act of 1871. Agreements with Indian leaders are properly referred to as treaties if they were acted on before the end of 1871, and as Public Acts of Congress, Executive Orders, or Agreements, if enacted after that year.

On the following pages you will see maps of the Blackfeet holdings and their reductions. This was all done within a hundred years. The Blackfeet were beaten through "friendship", "trust", sickness and starvation. If the people had heeded Napi's word, life would be different now!

In ancient times the chief God of the Blackfeet, their creator, was Na'pi (Old Man). The character of Old Man, as depicted in the stories told of him by the Blackfeet, is a mixture of opposite attributes. In serious tales, such as those of the creation, he is spoken of respectfully and there is no hint of the impish qualities which characterize him in other stories. He is powerful, but also at times impotent;





full of wisdom, yet at times so helpless that he has to ask aid from the animals. He is a combination of strengths, weakness, wisdom, joy, childishness, and malice. Old Man can never die and someday he will return. He also said that when he returned he would find us a changed and different people, living in a strange way from that which we lived when he left.

Long before the white man thought the earth was round, Na'pi said:

> "Here I will mark you off a piece of ground", and he did so. Then he said "there is your land, let no other people come into it. This is for your five tribes, Blackfeet, Blood, Piegans, Gros Ventre, and Sarcees. When people come to cross the line, take your bow and arrows, your lances and your battle axes and give them battle and keep them out. If they gain a footing, trouble will come to you."
>
> Our forefathers gave battle to all people who came to cross these lines and kept them out. Of late years we have let our friends, the white people, come in and you know the result. We, his children, have failed to obey his law.[1]

### TREATIES AND AGREEMENTS

In 1851, (see map #2), the Treaty of Fort Laramie was signed between the United States and the chiefs, headmen, and braves of the Sioux, Cheyenne, Arapahoe, Crow, Assiniboin, Mandan, Gros Ventre, and the Arickara tribes. Although the Blackfeet were not officially present, represented, or consulted at this peace conference, the boundaries of the Blackfeet Nation were limited and set for the time being. Peace was to be observed among the tribes and between the tribes and non-Indian travelers. This was stated so that the settlers could pass through Indian territory without being attacked by these tribes personally or being caught in inter-tribal warfare. Also roads were to be constructed, and military and civilian

outposts were to be built within the territory.

On October 17, 1855, (see map #3), A. Cumming and Isaac S. Steven, Commissioners on the part of the United States and the chiefs, headmen and delegates of the Blackfeet Nation, Flathead Nation, and the Nez Perce tribes met. Peace was to be upheld between the three nations and the Indians were to abstain from all hostilities whatsoever, except in self-defense. The Blackfeet gave consent and agreed to share a common hunting ground with afore-mentioned tribes. Non-Indian settlers were to be allowed to travel unmolested through Indian territory and the United States was to protect said tribes against the wrong doings of the settlers residing in or passing through their country. Also the United States was given permission to construct roads, establish lines of telegraph and military posts; use materials to build their agencies, missions, schools, farms, shops, mills and stations. In return for the loss of their land and way of life the Blackfeet Nation, including the Gros Ventre, were to be given twenty thousand dollars annually for ten years to be spent as the President and agency Superintendent deemed necessary. Also fifteen thousand dollars was to be spent annually for ten years to establish and instruct Indians in agriculture and mechanical pursuits, in education and in any other respect that would promote their civilization and christianization. Many old people died waiting for their annuities.

After the unratified treaty of 1865, (see map #4), a series of four executive orders none of them signed by the Blackfeet, limited their lands

On May 1, 1888, (see map #9), an act of congress ratified and confirmed an agreement with the Gros Ventre, Northern and Southern Piegans, Blood, Blackfeet and River Crow in Montana,"their chiefs, headmen and principle men, embracing a majority of all male adult Indians occupying said reservations". The tribes ceded more land to the United States and





agreed to seperate reservations. In return, the Blackfeet were to receive one hundred and fifty thousand dollars in these forms: in the purchasing of cows, bulls, and other stock, goods, clothing, subsistance, agricultural and mechanical implements; in providing employers; in education for Indian children; in the procurring of medicine and medical attendance, in the care and support of the aged, sick and helpless orphans; in the erection of such new agency and school buildings, mills and etc. deemed necessary; in assisting the Indians to build houses and enclose their farms; and in any other respect to promote their "civiliation, comfort and improvement". It was provided that in the employment of farmers, artisans, and laborers, preference in all cases be given to Indians residing on the reservation who were well qualified for such positions; provided further that all cattle issued to said Indians shall bear the brand of the Indian department, and should not be sold, exchanged, or slaughtered except by consent or order of the agency in charge, until such time as this restriction should be removed by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Also the individual tribalmembers were to be allotted lands in the following quanties: to the head of the family, one hundred and sixty acres; to each child over eighteen years of age, eighty acres; to each child under eighteen years of age, forty acres.

On June 10, 1896, (see map #10), an agreement with the Indians of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation and the United States was confirmed and ratified by the Congress. The Blackfeet ceded a strip of land that was later to become a part of Glacier National Park. In return they retained the right to cut and remove wood and timber for the agency school and personal use. They also reserved the right to hunt and fish upon that land. The United States agreed to pay the sum of one million five hundred thousand dollars. Once again the Blackfeet asked for the education of their children, care provided for the sick and aged, the purchase of livestock, goods,

clothing and etc. that would best promote the civilization of the Indians.

## EXECUTIVE ORDERS AND PROCLAMATIONS

Executive Orders of 1873 and 1874. (See maps #5 and 6.) U.S. Grant, bending to demands of cattlemen who wanted Indian land, moved the boundaries of the reservation twice. The Blackfeet protested through their Indian Agent, F.R. May. He was dismissed and replaced. The Blackfeet were coaxed into moving by promises from the replacement. No payment was ever received by the Blackfeet for this lost territory.

Executive Order of 1875. (See map #7) Yielding to Congress, U.S. Grant issued a third executive order restoring some of the land taken in 1874 to the Blackfeet and River Crows for common hunting grounds.

Executive Order of 1880. (See map #8) R.B. Hays, then President of the United States, signed the fourth executive order. The land restored in 1875 was taken back, this time to the boundaries of the 1874 order.

## A SUMMARY OF ACTS OF CONGRESS AFFECTING THE BLACKFEET RESERVATION

1871 - An act that removed Indian tribes from the status of foreign powers and made them wards of the U.S. government. After this, agreements with tribes were no longer called treaties.

1874 - An act to establish a reservation for certain Indians, including the Blackfeet, in the territory of Montana.

1887 - An act granting to the St. Paul, Minneapolis and the Manitoba Railway Company right of way through the Indian Reservations in Northern Montana and Northerwestern Dakota.

1905 - An act confirming the title of the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway Company to certain lands in the State of Montana.





1907 - An appropriation act establishing that the Blackfeet reservation was to be surveyed and a new land allotment made. Irrigation systems were to be implemented and 320 acres each were allotted for the Holy Family Mission and the Mission of the Methodist Epsicopal Church. After this was done the rest of the land was to be surveyed and opened up for sale.

1911 - An act establishing that lands to which the rights of the Indians were "extinguished" became a part of public domain of the United States and were opened to entry, sale or disposal.

1919 - An act making appropriations for the current and contingent expenses of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. A new allotment was to be made and the sale of surplus land stopped.

1920 - An act to authorize the Secretary of Interior to acquire certain Indian lands necessary to reservoir purposes in connection with the Blackfeet Indian reclamation project.

1922 - An act to authorize the leasing for mining purposes of unallotted lands on the Fort Peck and Blackfeet Indian Reservations in the State of Montana.

1923 - An act authorizing the Secretary of Interior to enter into an agreement with Toole County Irrigation District, of Cut Bank, Montana, for the settlement of the extent of the priority to the water of Two Medicine, Cut Bank and Badger Creeks of the Indians of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. The districts were to furnish in advance the entire cost to be incurred in determining the amount of the water of those streams to which the Indians were entitled to priority.

1924 - An act for the relief of certain nations or tribes of Indians in Montana, Idaho, and Washington. It set up the Court of Claims, with the right to appeal to the Supreme Court of the United States, to consider and determine all legal and equitable claims against the United States.

1924 - An act of provide for the disposal of homestead allotments of deceased allottees within the Blackfeet Indian Reservation in Montana.

1930 - An act authorizing the Secretary of the

Treasury to accept title to certain real estate, subject to a reservation of mineral rights in favor of the Blackfeet Indians.

1931 - An act for the enrollment of children born after December 30, 1919, whose parent or parents, are members of the Blackfeet tribe of Indians in the State of Montana.

1932 - An act to accept the grant by the State of Montana of concurrent police jurisdiction over the rights of way of the Blackfeet Highway, and over the rights of way of its connection with Glacier National Park road system.

1934 - The Indian Reorganization Act, or "Wheeler-Howard Act," to conserve and develop Indian lands and resources; to extend the Indians the right to form business and other organizations; to establish a credit system for Indians; to grant certain rights of home rule to Indians; to provide for vocational education for Indians. Tribes were authorized to exercise their residual soveriegnty through elected governments based on tribal constitutions.

1937 - An act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to relinquish in favor of the Blackfeet tribe of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation the interest in certain land acquired by the United State under the Federal Reclamation laws.

1946 - Indian Claims Commission is established to consider claims of Indian tribes and other recognizable Indian groups for monetary judgements against the United States.

1955 - Responsibility for directing medical care and health services for Indians is transferred from the Bureau of Indian Affairs to Public Health Services, Department of Health Education and Welfare. Division of Indian Health is organized for this purpose.

1968 - Civil Rights Act, Title II, "Rights of Indians", limited the power of tribal governments by guaranteeing the individual Indian citizen most of the same kinds of civil rights and protections afforded by the constitution to non-Indian individuals in relation to their state and local governments,





such as: freedom of speech and peaceable assembly, freedom of the press, protection against unreasonable search and seizure, equal protection under the law, due process, protection against excessive fines or cruel and unusual punishment, etc.

1975 - Indian Self Determination and Educational Assistance Act (Public Law 93-638), provides for maximum Indian participation in the government and education of Indian people by giving tribes the option of contracting for any service usually operated for them by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

## EVENTS THAT HAVE AFFECTED

## THE BLACKFEET RESERVATION

1775 - Continental Congress assumes jurisdiction over Indian Affairs.

1824 - Bureau of Indian Affairs is established in the War Department.

1849 - Bureau of Indian Affairs is transferred to the newly-established Department of Interior.

1869 - Small Pox epidemic caused an estimated two-thirds of the Blackfeet to die.

1870 - The Baker Massacre. Of the 173 Indians killed, over 100 were women and children.

1883-84 - Starvation Winter. Some 600 Piegans starved or froze to death.

1919 - Glacier County was established. Only a handful of Indians were allowed to vote, hence the county seat ended in Cut Bank.

1924 - Indians were granted full status as citizens.

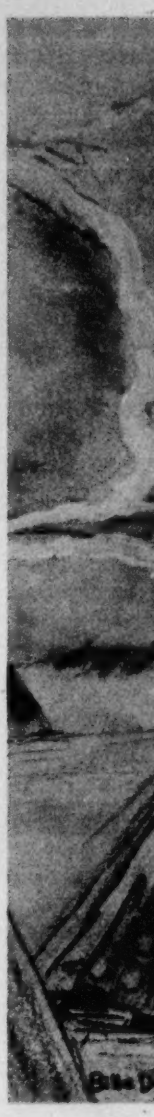
1928 - "Merriam Report" give impetus to more appropriations by Congress and encourages a shift in government policy toward more human development on the Indian reservations.

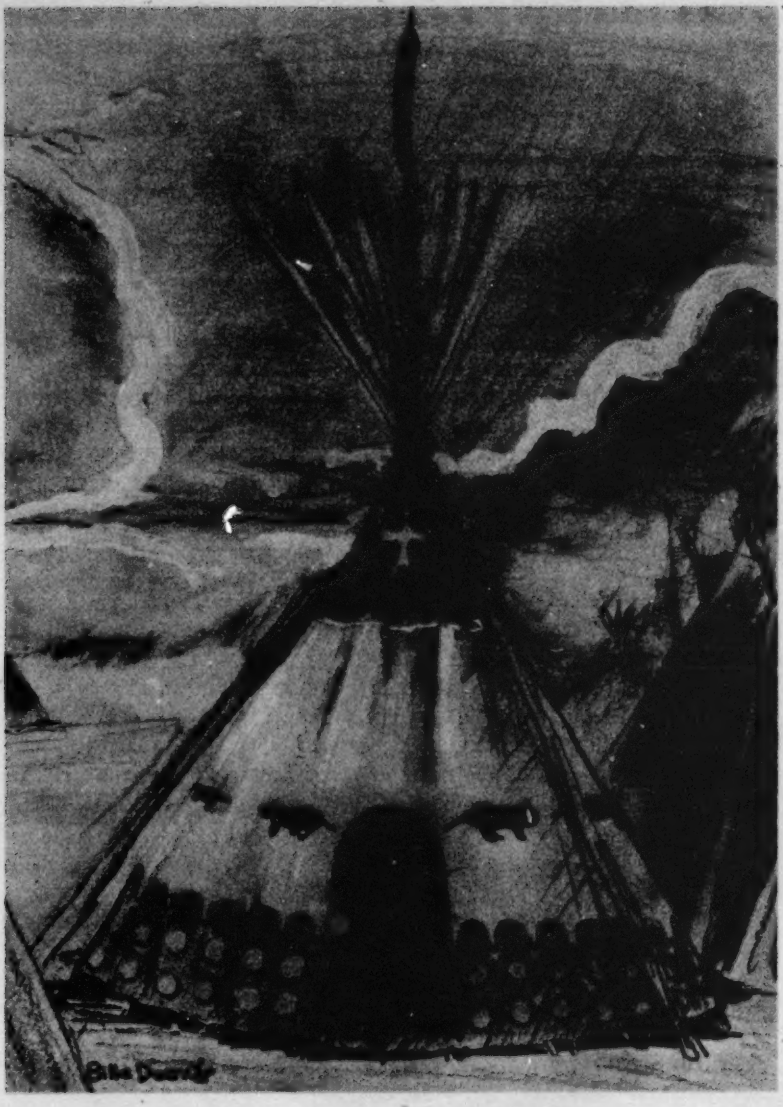
## THE BLACKFEET RESERVATION TODAY

The Blackfeet Reservation today has greatly diminished from the tribe's original holdings of the 1800's, as can be seen by comparing the maps. The reservation boundary encircles 1,525,712 acres, of which about two-thirds is still controlled by the Blackfeet people, held in trust by the Federal Government. Within this vast area, there are 1,509 homes, 570 of which are in rural area. On the north, the reservation borders the Canadian Province of Alberta, includes most of Glacier County in the U.S., and extends into Pondera County to the south. The western boundary is at the base of the Rocky Mountains. The majority of the land consists of high rolling plains, historically the hunting grounds for the Blackfeet people. Much of the grass land has never been broken by the plow. Elevations vary from a low of 3,400 feet in the east to over 9,000 feet at the Chief Mountain on the western boundary. Out of these highlands to the west flows an abundance of clear water. The Blackfeet people regard this source of water as one of our greatest assets and place a high priority on its beneficial use.

Rangelands on the reservation occupy 69% of the area. Only 14% of the grass area is farmed and another 7% is in timber land. All the other uses, including urban, residential, water, wildlands, roads and railroad, total 10% of the land use.

The community of Browning occupies about one-tenth of one percent of the land area of the reservation, but its population of 3,000 equals one-third of the total. The Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Blackfeet Tribal Offices and the Browning Public Schools are located there. The town has good prospects for continued stability and growth. All the other small communities on the reservation are unincorporated. To a large degree, the people must rely upon tribally supported economic development, housing, services and programs.





## III. TRIBAL GOVERNMENT JAMES KENNEDY

Indian tribes of the United States have always had a democratic form of government in which the popular attitude of the people was followed. However, since the introduction of the United States Government into Indian Country, this form of government has changed. The Supreme Court in 1831 stated in their decision that Indain Tribes were dependent domestic nations, that is, deferable political entities with the United States Government. This gave the Indians the right to enter into treaties with the United States Government.[1] Due to the decision handed down by Chief Justice John Marshall, in Worchester, Georgia, 6 Pet. 515,556-557: Congress has passed acts to regulate trade and intercourse with Indians, treat them as nations. protect their rights, and manifest a firm purpose to afford that protection which the treaties stipulate. The treaties and laws of the United States regard the Indian territory as completely separated from that of the States, and provide that all intercourse with them shall be carried exclusively by the government of the Union. Therefore, the Blackfeet Tribe is recognized as a nation, not generally bound by Montana state law.[2] The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, also known as the Wheeler-Howard Act, spelled out in its content that any tribe which became chartered and which adopted a constitution would become a legally-recognized corporation. As a corporation, the tribe came a holder of property and a holder of tangible rights granted by treaty or statute.

### THE CHIEF SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT

Early tribal government was somewhat fragmented due to the large population of nomadic Blackfeet. The only time that all of the tribe was together was during the tribal summer hunt. During the rest of the year the tribe divided into smaller bands. These smaller hunting bands were more practical for following their primary liveliehood, the wandering buffalo.

Each Blackfeet band had a civil chief and a war





chief. The civil chief was noted for his eloquence. The war chief was noted for ability to lead war parties. However, the basic political unit of the tribe was the hunting band, which provided for the rest of the tribe. These chiefs, as well as the chiefs of the hunting bands, were leaders only by consent and the will of the people. They had no power beyond their influence. The most influential band chief became recognized as head chief of the tribe. Important decisions were reached by agreement of all the chiefs in council.[3]

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRIBAL COUNCIL SYSTEM

The Blackfeet Reservation was first established in 1851 by the treaty of Fort Laramie. At that time the Blackfeet were placed under the supervision of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which had been a part of the Department of Interior in 1849. Prior to 1849 the Bureau of Indian Affairs was under the supervision of the War Department.[4]

The first BIA agency was established in 1855 at Fort Benton, located on the Missouri River. This was the start of the Bureau of Indian Affairs on the Blackfeet Reservation. From 1855 to the signing of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, the Bureau of Indian Affairs was the main source of government on the Blackfeet Reservation.[5] The agency headquarters has been moved twice since it was first established, to a site on Badger Creek and then to the present site at Browning.

The tribe became a self-governing body in 1936, after the Indian Reorganization Act. The Blackfeet wrote a charter and adopted a constitution which is still in effect. In the past few years there has been a movement in which some interested members of the Blackfeet Tribe have drafted a new proposed constitution. This document is being discussed, but has not yet been adopted.

The Blackfeet Tribal Business Council operates under the authority of three documents:

1. The Blackfeet Constitution and By-Laws. This brief authority provides a broad latitude for policy interpretation.

2. The Corporate Charter of the Blackfeet Tribe. The stated purpose of this document is to further the economic development of the Blackfeet Tribe by conferring certain corporate rights, powers, privileges, and immunities.

3. The Comprehensive Plan adopted by the Tribe.

The Tribal Council form of government is the only form of Indian authority recognized by the Department of Interior. No single individual can exercise this control, as could a Mayor, Governor or President.

This rigid government form puts a great strain on the Tribal Council and Chairman to adequately manage all the programs to which they are committed. Compounding the problem is the two-function concept the Tribal administration must provide. It not only governs the reservation and administers services, such as police, law and order, and social services, but under the corporate charter, it also directs economic development and the handling of business and finance. This sizeable effort requires proper management and staff to be successful.

General objectives within the Blackfeet Comprehensive Plan can be stated as:

1. Establish organizational units that provide an administration responsible to the people and able to aggressively pursue economic development.
2. Reinforce self-determination of the Tribe through land acquisition and Indian ownership of business.
3. Maintain the Reservation as a trust responsiblity of the Federal Government while gradually assuming control of Bureau functions and other programs.



4. Reorganize Tribal administration under a revised plan of operation to accomplish the concepts embodied in the plan.
5. Provide an elected constitutional review committee to revise constitutions at the public meetings, paying particular attention to redistricting, staggered terms of councilmen, voting criteria, and greater fiscal control.

## THE BLACKFEET TRIBAL BUSINESS COUNCIL AND THE BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

The tribal government that is in operation now is relatively young and progressive. The governing body consists of a nine member council, known as the Blackfeet Tribal Business Council. The nine members are elected by popular vote of the entire population of the Blackfeet tribe, from the four districts that make up the Blackfeet Reservation - Browning, Heart Butte, Old Agency, and Seville, with each council member being elected to a two year term. Three councilmen are elected from the Browning district, as it has the largest population of any of the four. The other three districts are represented by two councilmen each.

To be elected to the tribal council, an individual must be a voting member of the Blackfeet tribe, 21 years of age, and must reside in the district in which he is running, six months prior to the election. They must also have no criminal convictions. A tribal election is held every two years on even numbered years on the third Tuesday in June. The tribal election is supervised by the Superintendent of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in charge of the Blackfeet Reservation. After the council has been elected they have the power within their own group to elect a chairman, vice-chairman, and several different committees as they see fit. Some of the more important committees that are formed concerning tribal government are the Land Board Committee, Education Committee, Housing Committee, Lake Shore Committee and the Law and Order Committee. The tribal election

is a very important part of reservation life, as the Tribal Council has become the main political power on the reservation. Many of the Indian people look toward their councilmen not only as men controlling the entire reservation, but as men to whom they can turn when personal problems arise and they need assistance in solving them. All of the tribal offices and the Bureau of Indian Affairs offices are located in the same building at the Blackfeet Indian Agency in Browning. The Tribal Council and the Bureau of Indian Affairs work in close conjunction.

The Blackfeet tribal government has enumerated powers, subject to limitations set out by the Constitution of the United States, and by its own tribal constitution. While in office each council member is to uphold the tribal constitution and to manage tribal plan of operation. All tribal council decisions are subject to approval by the Secretary of Interior. Blackfeet Tribal Business Council meetings are scheduled to be held on the first Thursday of each month. However, when the chairman feels that an issue is pressing, a special meeting may be held. All meetings take place at the Blackfeet Tribal Office. General meetings are open to the public. A quorum, or two-thirds of the council, must be present to legally transact any business concerning the Blackfeet Tribe. Decisions that are made at a meeting with a quorum must be passed by a majority vote. Committees meet periodically, when business conerning them arises. The Land Board Committee is the most important, as land is the Blackfeet tribe's most important resource. This committee usually meets twice a month. The Blackfeet Tribal Business Council operates with income received from the following resources:

a. Oil and Gas Royalties
b. Farm and Grazing Land Lease
c. Timber Royalties
d. Lakeshore Development - Fishing and Camping Permits
e. Federal Grants

Income received from these resources is divided into two classes of funds, controlled by the Superintendent of the Blackfeet Agnecy. Class A funds are paid to the Superintendent who disburses these funds back to various tribal programs. Class B funds go directly to tribal operations.

Since the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, it has been the policy of the Bureau of Indian Affairs to act as an advisor rather than as guardian. The Bureau of Indian Affairs has made it possible for tribes to take more responsibility in their own government, by the passage of various legislation. Public Law 93-638, the Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, is probably the most important piece of legislation passed concerning tribes, as it gives them opportunities to contract various Bureau of Indian Affiars programs, such as the Revolving Credit Program and parts of the Education, Law and Order, and Social Services Programs. The Bureau's position is that this legislation will strengthen and improve tribal government.

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## IV. EDUCATION

JACKIE PARSONS

The Blackfeet Indians were first observed by white fur traders about 1750. At that time they were without guns and the white man's material goods. Within twenty years they were armed and had begun to expand their power. They were a nomadic tribe, following the buffalo, which provided food, clothing, and shelter. The large body of land held by the Blackfeet people stretched from the Saskatchewan River in Canada, south to the Yellowstone River in Montana. During the era from approximately 1770 to 1830 the Blackfeet were at the height of their power. Their population was approximately eighteen thousand. Blackfeet defiance to Indian enemies and white men was short lived. Although the white frontier was not pressing the Blackfeet Nation, they were soon to feel the power of a new enemy -- the dreaded white man's disease, smallpox. In 1836 smallpox was carried back to the Blackfeet camps by raiding parties. Approximately one-third of the population died. They were to be hit by this dreaded disease twice more, and the population was reduced by two-thirds of its normal number. During this time, when Blackfeet resistance was at a low ebb, the Jesuit priests started their missionary work with the Blackfeet Indians. In 1837, Father Nickolas Point, a Jesuit priest, entered the Blackfeet country but stayed less than one year due to the hostility of the people. In 1840, the Jesuit priests came again into Blackfeet country, this time to stay. Perserverance was the key to establishing missions in Blackfeet land. These priests, by living among the Blackfeet people, seemed to bring inspiration and hope to a defeated and confused people.

The goal of establishing religion among the native Indians became a reality in the year 1859. Three log cabins were erected near Choteau, Montana. Here the priests studied the Blackfeet language and taught a few Indian boys. This site was abandoned in 1862 and moved to a more suitable location, the new St. Peter's





Mission on the Sun River. Up to this time, educational efforts were centered around vocational and spiritual teachings. The first formal educational efforts began in 1879 at the new St. Peter's Mission, which had been moved again, but which remained on the Sun River. Due to the restless spirit and nomadic life the Blackfeet lived, it was very difficult to convey a European-style education during this period.

In 1884 the Ursuline Nuns arrived at St. Peter's Mission and Blackfeet girls were immediately immersed in education. Up to this time females were not educated because of the heavy burden of work that was expected of them. This was also the year of the "starvation winter". The agent at the time was a religious man who had his wife teach a few of the Indian girls, emphasizing spiritual and vocational teachings. Very little effort was put forth to formally educate the Blackfeet people, since learning to be civilized meant learning a host of little things: to comb one's hair, to wear white man's clothing, to sit in a chair, to sleep in a bed, to live in a house, to use a knife and fork, to tell time, etc. The minimum fundamentals of the white man's culture required painstaking indoctrination. The mission schools on the reservation were probably to play the most important role in the education of the Blackfeet. Three hours a day was devoted to academic training, three hours a day to religious training, and three hours a day to vocational training.

In 1872, an analysis of data showed an urgent need for more than one approach to educate the Indian. The first public school was opened for the Blackfeet, but closed before the year was over, due to the nomadic life style of the Blackfeet. These first attempts at educating the Blackfeet were made under trying conditions, since the people did not accept control and had no faith in the white man's educational efforts.

The 1880's were an important decade for the education of the Blackfeet, since the concept of government boarding schools was developed and programs were planned for a long-range period. It was thought that boarding schools were the only practical method by

which to impress the minds of the coming generation with the superiortiy of the so-called "civilized" over the "uncouth and precarious" course of life in the tipi. It was thought that by removing the students from parental influence and placing them in off-reservation schools, through strict and regimented military-style discipline, that an accelerated absorption of the white civilization would occur.

Public schools on the reservation received their impetus from the growning number of white children in Browning, since this was the location of the new agency. A group of white businessmen and the agent journeyed to Choteau, Montana, the county seat, and met with the Commissioners and the County Superintendent in order to provide for their children's education. They were given permission to open a public school in the town of Browning in 1905. Up to this time the white children had been taught by private tutors at various homes and ranches on the reservation.

Although the public school was opened primarily for the white children, an increasing white and Indian population and Indian acceptance of the white culture made it necessary to construct rural schools. Government day schools were opened for the Indians in 1915, first at Heart Butte, Old Agency, and Starr. Due to weather conditions and rural existence, public schools started operating at various other locations on the reservation the same year. These schools sometimes operated only one year, usually in private homes, for the benefit of the family and nearest neighbors. They were subsidized by whatever the families could contribute -- money, butter, eggs, vegetables, meat, etc. These schools closed intermittently due to teacher shortages, severe weather conditions and family transiency.

The rural school curriculum consisted of courses in the three r's and in whatever unique talents the teacher may have possessed. Eventually, these rural schools were to disappear, with the reorganization of counties and school districts. Year by year, with the withdrawal of Federal participation in funding rural schools, the larger rural schools were turned





over to district management; and the smaller ones consolidated with the nearest larger ones. As years passed, and the need for consolidation became more evident. With the advent of better roads and better transportation, the small rural school soon became a thing of the past. This caused a heavy student influx to the large remaining rural schools, Babb, Heart Butte, and Croff-Wren. During this time. the early 1950's, the Browning schools became the main administrative center of education for the reservation.

As the years progressed, the acceptance of the white culture increased, as did the success of formal education. One hundred years from the time the Jesuit priests first came to Blackfeet land to educate the Indian, the first two fullblood Blackfeet Indians graduated from Browning High School. They were Robert West Wolf and William Spotted Eagle; the year was 1936.

With the heavy increase in population on the reservation after the war years the need to enlarge the school facilities became sudden and demanding. The new Browning High School was built in 1954, but the school system was still twenty classrooms short. Immediate plans were made for another school, but by the time this was ready to be occupied, classroom space was still inadequate. In 1966, five portable classrooms were purchased in order to accommodate the heavy enrollemnt. In 1967, yet another school was ready for occupany. This should have taken care of the heavy enrollment, but did not. The Catholic Center had to be rented. It had six classrooms and housed the 5th grade. A new junior high school was built and occupied in 1974. The rated capacity for the Browning Public Schools is 1,376 students. For the past five years the schools have still been overcrowded by 795 students per year, thus approximately 40 more classroom are needed to accommodate the student population.

The education of the Blackfeet people seems to be in an ever-critical situation. The threat of closure of off-reservation boarding schools, the coming of

industry and de-centralization of cities , can only mean one thing for the Blackfeet people: progress. Through progress, we hope the people will attain the highest degree of education while still preserving their unique Blackfeet Indian Heritage.

## EARLY SCHOOLS ON THE BLACKFEET RESERVATION: A CHRONOLOGY

### MISSION SCHOOLS

In the year 1859, the first mission school was opened for the Blackfeet Indians near Choteau, Montana, which was reservation land at that time. Three log cabins were erected and called the St. Peter's Mission. (This was the first St. Peter's Mission.) Up to this time, education efforts were centered around vocational and spiritual teachings. The first effort at formal education began in 1879 at the new St. Peter's Mission, which had been moved again, but remained on the Sun River. The school was moved again because of extensive fire damage to the buildings. Rather than rebuild, it was decided to move the site and enlarge the school. In 1884, the Ursuline Nuns arrived at St. Peter's Mission and girls were immediately introduced to education. Blackfeet students continued to attend this school until it closed.

In the year 1883, a small one room mission school was opened at Robare. Only a few Indian children were taught, due to the fact that they had to sneak across the Birch Creek River to be taught by the Catholic priests. At this time the agent for the Blackfeet was a Protestant and had ordered the Jesuits from the reservation. In 1887, Chief White Calf contributed land to the Jesuit priests to build a mission school for the Blackfeet. This school was built and opened in 1890 on the Two Medicine River for 100 students, age 6-15 years of age. It closed in December, 1939.





### GOVERNMENT BOARDING SCHOOLS

In 1892, the Willow Creek School, a government boarding school, opened for 101 students. This school operated continuously until a fire destroyed it. The site was then moved to Cut Bank Creek.

In 1904, the Cut Bank Creek Boarding School was opened for 125 students. This school operated until 1934, when it closed for a period of four years. The reason for closure was that the Bureau of Indian Affairs was trying to phase out of education and shift the responsibility to the public school districts. The school was reopened in the school year 1937-38, due to pressure from the local people. At this time it is still operating, but strictly as a boarding dormitory. School District #9 contracts with the B.I.A. for its operation.

### GOVERNMENT DAY SCHOOLS

The first government day school opened in 1915, at Heart Butte, Old Agency, and Starr. These rural schools are still in existence.

Croff, Chief All Over, Higgins, Fisher Flats, Mad Plume, Durham, Coldfeet, Swims Under, Upper Birch Creek, Little Badger, Heavy Breast and Camp #9 schools opened in 1933, under the Public Work Administration Grants. These smaller schools were to phase out with the advent of better roads. It was more economical to bus the children to the larger remaining day schools or into Browning than to continue operating the small schools.

### PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS

The first public school opened at Four Persons Agency at Choteau, Montana, for 26 students, in 1872 and closed in 1876 because of poor attendance.

Altyn opened in 1898, for white children only. Altyn was a silver and copper mining boom town located

in Babb Valley. It existed until 1900, when a new school was built on the St. Mary River and called the Babb School. A new site was chosen and a school built in 1939. This school is still operating, but annexed with School District #9, in 1972.

The first public school in Browning opened in 1905, for 20 students. Due to the increase in enrollment, another room was added the following year. This did not take care of the heavy enrollment and school was taught in rented buildings until 1910 when a new school was built. This school was considered too great an expense to the district and was moved to the present site of the elementary school and later used as a dormitory. In 1920, the new Browning School opened at the present site of the elementary school and housed all twelve grades. Mr. Douglas Gold was the first Superintendent. In 1936, a new addition was added to the school under the W.P.A. A new high school was completed in 1954, housing grades 9-12. In 1956, the K.W. Bergan School was completed for grades K-3. In 1966, five portable classrooms were rented for grade 2. In 1967, the Vina Chattin School was completed for grades 4-6. Because of the heavy enrollment, the district had to rent the Catholic Center for grade 5. In 1974, a new Junior High was completed and started operation with a gym addition, completed in 1976.

The old Babb School, New Babb School, Camp #9, Carway, Hiltons, Galbreath, Peskan, Dubray, Kraft, St. Mary, DeWolfe, Burd, Paisley, Cut Finger, Pontresina, Heavy Runner, Blackfoot, Croff-Wren, Big Lake, Reevis, Mad Plume, Seville, and Hamilton were among the public and private schools that opened on the reservation. These schools were to open and close intermittently due to weather conditions, teacher shortages, family transiency and funding. These early schools housed grades 1-8. Thus, if a student was to continue his education, he had to choose between going to an off-reservation, government boarding school, having to board with relatives, or having his entire family move into Browning. All of these choices imposed difficulties on the family.





## OFF-RESERVATION SCHOOLS ATTENDED BY BLACKFEET INDIANS

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| Genoa, Nebraska . . . . | First Blackfeet attended this school in the early 1890's. |
| Carlisle, Pennsylvania. | First Blackfeet enrolled in 1889. |
| Flandreau, South Dakota. | Opened in 1882, first Blackfeet enrolled in the late 1880's. |
| Chemawa, Oregon . . . . | Opened in 1885, first Blackfeet enrolled in 1889. |
| Busby, Montana . . . . | First Blackfeet enrolled in 1950. |
| Chilocco, Oklahoma. . . | Date unknown when first Blackfeet enrolled. |
| Fort Sill, Oklahoma . . | Date unknown when first Blackfeet enrolled. |
| Lawton, Oklahoma. . . . | Date unknown when first Blackfeet enrolled. |
| Haskell, Kansas . . . . | Opened in 1884, first Blackfeet enrolled in 1889. |
| Riverside, Oklahoma . . | Date unknown when first Blackfeel enrolled |
| Wahpaton, North Dakota. | Date unknown when first Blackfeet enrolled. |
| Concho, Oklahoma. . . . | Date unknown when first Blackfeet enrolled. |
| Pierre, South Dakota. . | Opened in 1881, first Blackfeet enrolled in 1930. |
| Fort Shaw, Montana. . . | Opened in 1892, with 60 Blackfeet enrolled. |
| Intermountain, Utah . . | First Blackfeet enrolled in 1973. |

## FUNDING FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS ON THE BLACKFEET RESERVATION

1872 -- First public school opened at Four Persons Agency, funded by United States Government.

1883 -- Regular day school was opened at Old Agency on Badger Creek, funded by United States Government.

1890 -- The Holy Family Mission was opened on the Two Medicine River, funded by the United States Government and public and private donations.

1892 -- First government Boarding School opened at Willow Creek, funded by United States Government.

1898 -- First regular school opened at Altyn, strictly for white children, funded by individuals.

1905 -- First public school opened in Browning, funded by State money.

1915 -- Starr, Heart Butte, Old Agency, funded by the United States Government until 1936.

1920 -- The Blackfoot School, funded by State and District monies.

1933 -- Croff, Chief All Over, Higgins, Fisher Flats, Mad Plume, Durham, Coldfeet, Swims Under, Upper Birch Creek, Little Badger, Heavy Breast, and Camp #9, opened under the Public Work Administration Grants. They were funded by the U. S. Government, State and District monies.

1934 -- Johnson-O'Malley Act - This act authorized the Secretary of Interior to enter into contracts with the States or Territories for the education, medical attention and social welfare of Indians.

1936 -- Johnson-O'Malley Act was amended and the State of Montana used this money strictly for hot lunch programs for Indian children. This money was intended as supplemental money to consider the unique educational needs of Indian children that were not being met under other Federal Programs. It was not until 1969, under the direction of Mr. Earl Barlow, that this money was taken from the lunch program and used for the purpose it was enacted for. It is now operating under P.L. 93-638 for the purpose of self-determination and Indian education.



1964 -- P.L. 874, a Federal Program designed to support public educational institutions attended by children from military installations and federal reservations. The Blackfeet and other Indian reservations became eligible because of trust status lands.

1965 -- 1965-76, E.S.E.A. Act, Title I-X, a supplemental educational program for disadvantaged students. To equalize educational benefits for deprived children.

1972 -- The Indian Education Act, a federal program to provide supplemental programs to meet the unique needs of American Indians and Alaska Native students.

1976 -- Funding for the Browning Public Schools system today is:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 58.5% | -- | Federal Money |
| 21.2% | -- | State Money |
| 16.3% | -- | County Money |
| 4.0% | -- | District Money |

## TODAY'S SCHOOLS

Of the numerous schools that once existed on the Blackfeet Reservation, only four are in operation today. The Babb School has approximately forty students enrolled in grades K-6. Grades seven through twelve attend school in Browning. Heart Butte is operating for grades K-8, and has two hundred students attending. Starr is operating for grades 1-4 and has approximately forty students. The original school that was built in 1915 was condemned and destroyed in May of 1976. Four trailers now house the students at Starr. A Headstart and Kindergarten building was constructed in 1969. Browning is the center of education on the Blackfeet Reservation at this time. The Browning Schools serve more than two thousand students, K-12. The system is now running buses to every part of the reservation. This is not only more economical but also gives the students a chance to compete more scholastically and to participate in extra-curricular activities, exposing them to a broader sense of values.

## V. AN OVERVIEW OF THE BLACKFEET

STAN JUNEAU

The Blackfeet of today are descendants of a tribe of people who were among the most powerful Indian groups of the northwestern plains. The days before the "Napikwan" (whiteman) were referred to as the "Dog Days", as the dog was the beast of burden. Depending on the dog for moving from place to place in their nomadic way of life, and for hunting, the Blackfeet way of life was very limited.

As mentioned in chapter one, the present-day Blackfeet are descended from tribes known as the Blackfeet, Bloods, and Piegans, all of Algonkian linguistic stock. The three tribes shared the same language, culture and religion. Members of these tribes lived in the present Canadian province of Saskatchewan until about 1730. They then started to drift southward into Montana where buffalo and other game were more abundant. Because of the location of their hunting territory, the Blackfeet encountered white men later then did most tribes. They had, however, acquired some European items of trade indirectly from Canadians through exchange with their neighbors, the Cree, and Assiniboine. The Blackfeet became acquainted with the white man in the late eighteenth century, and thus began the Blackfeet's dependency on the white man for the luxuries he possessed.

In spite of the fierce, war-like reputation of the Blackfeet, the early Canadian fur traders were on friendly terms with them. One day, He-That-Looks-At-The-Calf was shot and killed in an argument involving a few trinkets by a man named Meriwether Lewis. The Blackfeet hated the advancing Americans from that day on and referred to them as "Man-Who-Shoots-In-The-Back." Settlers, travelers, traders, and soldiers could not be ignored, however, and after several small ineffective treaty attempts, the Blackfeet were included without their participation in the Treaty of Fort Laramie in 1851. In 1855 the government entered into a treaty with the Blackfeet and several neighboring tribes which provided for use of a large portion of the original Blackfeet Reservation as a common hunting ground.

The early Blackfeet did not have a central political entity except in time of war. They were a group of people sharing a common language and culture but political organization did not extend beyond the local headmen or chiefs. The tribal leaders were chosen for some outstanding deeds they had performed and were leaders only as long as they maintained a group of followers. While the white man's government is based on formal voting systems and binding majority rule, the Indians valued a person's individual qualities of leadership and ability to govern by persuasion.

The Indian leader was sensitive to the needs and desires of many individuals and was able to develop compromises and consensus. Because the coalitions of the heads of Blackfeet bands were few and of short duration, the military and governmental personnel charged with the treaty making, control, and programs for the Blackfeet Indians were fairly ineffective. A Treaty made with one band, or even several bands, was not binding on the tribe as a whole. Today the elected Blackfeet leader's constituency lies within the exterior boundaries of the reservation. He/she is also answerable to off-reservation enrolled Blackfeet Indians but to a much lesser degree.

In 1873 the Blackfeet's southern boundary was moved 200 miles north by Presidential Orders and Congressional Acts, and the land to the south was opened to homesteading. The Blackfeet were forced to accept reservation living and dependence upon government rationing for survival. In 1888 additional lands were ceded and separate boundaries established for the Blackfeet, Fort Belnap, and Fort Peck Reservations. Congressional legislation and governmental policies

slowly eroded the Blackfeet reservation to the land base of its present proportions, 1,525,712 acres. Blackfeet Indians own two-thirds of this acreage held in trust by the U.S. Government. Today a land acquisition program to increase the land base is an important part of the tribal council administration.

The present Blackfeet Tribal political system has been organized under the 1934 Indian Re-Organization Act, (Wheeler-Howard Act). In 1935, the tribal council was composed of thirteen members, but now, nine members are elected every two years by the eligible voters of each reservation district. Although there are county, state, and local city forms of government operating on the reservation, the Blackfeet Tribal Business Council is the supreme governing body. This sometimes creates a conflict in policy with the other supportive government bodies. The Blackfeet Tribal Business Council functions as the Executive, Judicial and the Legislative branches of government. This type of government puts a great strain on the members of the Business Council to adequately manage all of the programs they are committed to. This strain compounded by the unforeseen emergencies that arise each day.

Police protection on the reservation is complicated by several overlapping jurisdictions. The county, state highway patrol, Federal Bureau of Investigation, local city police, and border patrol all have limited jurisdiction. The primary peace keeping force, however, is the Tribal Police Department and the Tribal Court system, which have jurisdiction over all Blackfeet Indian residents. The reservation is divided into seven communities/districts: Browning, Heart Butte, Starr School, Babb, Blackfoot, Seville Flats, and East Glacier. The largest number of people reside in Browning. Most of the tribal activities take place in Browning, which is also the B.I.A. agency headquarters.



In the early 1700's population estimates for the Blackfeet Tribe exceeded 15,000 persons. Smallpox, other diseases, starvation, and war reduced the population to 2,000 by 1885. Since that time, however, the population of the tribe has increased to 10,668 persons enrolled in 1972. This increase is approximately 12% per decade.

Of the tribally enrolled membership, approximately one half live off the reservation, leaving about 6,000 members residing within the boundaries of the reservation. There are also approximately 1,700 non-Indians, and non-Blackfeet Indians living on the reservation. Most make their livelihood from reservation resources. A group of Cree Indians reside mainly in the Babb and St. Mary area, but through intermarriage with the Blackfeet, they also live in other areas of the reservation. The Cree Indians are not recognized by the U.S. government for Bureau of Indian Affairs benefits, except for the descendants of the Little Shell Band, who are enrolled at the Rocky Boy Reservation.

The non-Indian population is expected to decrease to about 1,600 persons by the year 1990. Some have intermarried with the Blackfeet, they and others have made the reservation their home. Some own businesses, ranches, farm or work for the federal government or for the public school system. For the most part, these people have maintained a friendly relationship with the tribe.

The number of people in the labor force, the number employed, and the number unemployed varies considerably from year to year, the dominant reason being the constant moving of people in and out of the prevailing seasonal and low-income jobs. Two of the greatest sources of employment are agriculture and construction. Both are seasonal and contribute to an unemployment rate which sometimes reaches as high as 50% during the winter months. The largest sources of permanent employment are with the Federal government,

the tribal council and its related programs, and with the public school system.

The Federal government's efforts to help the tribe's economy have not been consistent, due to the many conflicting policies of assimilation, termination, relocation, and self-determination. The Blackfeet Tribe, however, has proven itself to be progressive and is actively engaged in pursuing a higher standard of living for its people.

Since 1954, through the Bureau of Indian Affairs Employment Assistance and Higher Education Grant Programs, many Blackfeet Indians have relocated to the major cities of the United States to seek better employment and educational opportunities. During the past five years, however, there has been a trend for these people to return to the reservation, due in part to better reservation living conditions and increased employment and educational opportunities. The outmigration has also decreased substantially.

The per-capita income in 1960 was $915.00 and had increased to $1,286.00 by 1972. While there has been a gain in income levels for the Blackfeet, there is still a large deficiency in relation to the other segments of society. The development of industry, commercial and natural resources, and recreational employment has been a major goal of the tribe, in order to increase the economy and standard of living. The percentage of Indian families earning over $10,000 per year is 9.2% while those families living below the poverty level with incomes of less than $3,000 per year is a high 26.5%. Increased economic independence by more Indian management and development, in all of the Blackfeet Tribe's main sources of revenue-oil and gas royalities, land and timber leases, land development, industry, etc. should result in higher incomes and more permanent employment for the tribal members. To achieve economic growth, the Blackfeet must be educated to understand all phases of the business world.





The Blackfeet Tribe recognizes tourism and recreation as a growing enterprise for the reservation. Since the Blackfeet Reservation borders Glacier National Park, a constant flow of tourists passes through the reservation. The natural wealth of lakes, streams, mountains and Indian culture create a great potential for the added development of tourist attractions.

Prior to the reservation era, Blackfeet people had their own educational system which helped them survive many ordeals and traumas. It was a system developed over many generations and consisted of the men teaching the young boys to hunt and become men, the women teaching the girls the skills of homemaking and moving camps, the elderly teaching the legends, the Medicine Men teaching the religion and everyone understanding and fulfilling their assigned goals and tasks.

After the Blackfeet succumbed to reservation life, the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Christians decided to educate the children in the proper American way of life. Together they developed schools many hundreds of miles away from the reservation, where the children were not in daily contact with their families. The educators did not realize that they could control the everyday activities of the Indian children, but they could not control their minds. Therefore, they failed because the Indian children refused to give up the language, religion, culture and heritage their parents and grandparents had taught them prior to their entering the white man's educational system.

There are several educational systems on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation today, four of which are public school districts. There is School District #9 in Browning, Elementary School District #50 in East Glacier, Elementary School District #1 in Heart Butte, and School District #15 in Cut Bank which serves the eastern portion of Seville Flats.

The separation between elementary and high school districts creates some problems in planning for the education of children, and the lack of an adequate tax base, as trust land pays no taxes, creates a fiscal problem in administering School District #9 in Browning, where approximately 2,200 students from Kindergarten through grade 12 are enrolled. Other educational programs include: Headstart, Blackfeet Day Care, Blackfeet Boarding Dormitory (living facility only), Blackfeet Community Free School, Blackfeet Community College, Blackfeet Native American Programs, Blackfeet Indian Action, and several adult learning programs.

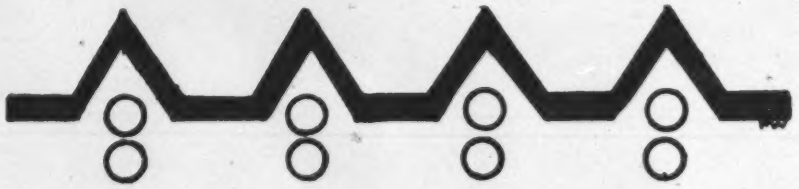
The curriculum of these programs gives emphasis to the dominant society's educational methods, but there is now a need for instituting the Blackfeet culture, traditions and language in all grades to insure that they are not lost forever. The school system sees the need to give the students an education in both cultures, as those children must learn to compete and live in the dominant white society; yet they must also be given the opportunity to learn their heritage and values in order to remain Blackfeet people. The need for improving the educational background of the Indian people has been a major emphasis on the Blackfeet Reservation, and the level of education is improving greatly with more Indian people graduating from high school, attending higher education institutions, and returning home to assume leadership and management positions.

In the past, Blackfeet Indians were nomadic people, therefore, their tipi homes were not permanent. Large, extended families, including several generations, possessed more than one tipi. The coming of the white man forced the Indians into permanent locations, changed their life style, and led them to accept some form of the white man's house. The first permanent homes often replaced several tipis and were small and inadequate. They created overcrowded conditions, and resulted in the deterioration of the family structure. As a result of the disastrous flood of 1964, which wiped out many homes along the creek bottoms, the Federal government and the Blackfeet Tribe started a housing program. Homes are now planned in accordance with Indian desires and the environment. The Tribal Housing Authority has initiated several building projects and recognizes the need for more homes to be built. The projected goal of the Tribal Council is to build 1,200 homes by the year 2000.

The health problems of the Indian people are common knowledge. To help alleviate health problems, Browning has a 34 bed hospital with clinics in various reservation communities. There is a staff of physicians, dentists, pharmacists, and nursing and supportive staff, with contract medical care provided in Great Falls, Spokane, Seattle and Kalispell.

The religions of the tribe vary from the traditional Blackfeet religions and beliefs carried on from the past, to the dominant society's religions - Catholic, Mormon, Methodist, etc. The Blackfeet people still maintain and practice their traditional ceremonies throughout the year and there is a movement to teach these to the young.

Though the tribe has had its share of disappointments, setbacks, and negative relationships with the government, the people continue to display extreme qualities of ability and determination. The Blackfeet historically were recognized by Indians and white's alike for their bravery and leadership; Blackfeet of today are cognizant of their ancestor's mark on history and seek to improve upon it.....



## NOTES

I. BEFORE THE RESERVATION

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2. Ibid.
3. John C. Ewers, The Blackfeet, Raiders on the Northwestern Plains, University of Oklahoma Press, 1958.
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4. Ralph Andrews, Curtis Western Indians, Superoir Publishing Co. 1962, pp 114-115.
5. Howard Harrod, Mission Among the Blackfeet, U. of Okla. Press, 1971, p. 35.

II. TREATIES, EXECUTIVE ORDERS AND ACTS OF CONGRESS

1. George Bird Grinnell. Blackfoot Lodge Tales, University of Nedraska Press. 1962.

III. TRIBAL GOVERNMENT

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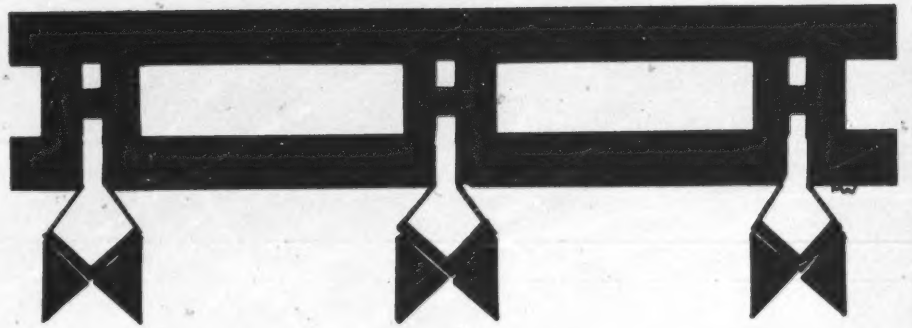

## THE WRITERS

Diane Barlow was born in Hot Springs, Montana and graduated from Browning High School in 1975. She is a student at the University of Montana, majoring in history. "Learning about people's backgrounds leads to less stereotyping."

James Kennedy was born and raised in Browning, graduated from Northern Montana College and now teaches physical education at Browning Junior High School. He has also worked for the Education and Welfare division of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. "I like to see kids do well in athletics, succeed in their educational ambitions and return to work here."

Viney Kennedy was born in Browning and graduated from Browning High School in 1969. She is a student at the University of Montana and is now receiving independent study credit for research on water and the water rights of the Blackfeet tribe.

Jackie Parsons, an enrolled tribal member and lifelong resident of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, lives on a ranch near Starr School. She has attended Haskell Institute, Flathead Valley Community College and Northern Montana College. She has worked as a nutrition technician, a home econmist and was a Blackfeet Tribal Judge. She is now Executive Director of the Northern Plains Crafts Association at the Museum of the Northern Plains Indians at Browning.

67



68

Stan Juneau, an enrolled member of the Blackfeet tribe, was born and educated in Browning. He attended Haskell Institute and graduated from Eastern Montana College. While there, he was the first member of a minority group to be elected to student government and was selected for Who's Who Among Students in America's Colleges and Universities. He is now a guidance counselor at Browning High School and is active on many Indian education committees.

D.W. (Billie) Billedeaux was born in Dillon, Montana and is an enrolled member of the Blackfeet tribe. He studied at the Academy of Arts, San Francisco, at Western Montana College and at the University of Montana. He has taught at D-Q University and exhibited at the Blackfeet Arts and Crafts Show, The Intertribal Ceremonial in Gallup, N.M., where he took first prize, and at the Flathead Museum. He is presently at work on a series of murals for the Indian Center in St. Ignatius, Montana.